



Elephants: Perfect or Pests?

When you think of an elephant what comes to mind? Elephants are fun loving kind creatures. Many of us in the Western World have seen elephants at the zoo. Elephants are social creatures. They hug by wrapping their large trunks around each other. Just like many young children suck their thumbs, an elephant calf will suck his trunk for comfort. Elephants live together in families just like we do. They also have a fantastic memory. Elephants are large animals. Because of their size, adult elephants have no predators except humans. Calves, however, may fall prey to crocodiles, lions and other meat eaters. Humans hunt adult elephants for their valuable ivory tusks. This is called poaching and it is illegal, but is still a big problem in Africa.

In our eyes elephants are perfect creatures, however if you ask the people of Kenya they will tell you a different story. To them, an elephant is a six-ton garden pest. It is a wrecking ball that kills, tramples and terrifies. Conservationists say this is a worrisome trend: conflict between humans and wildlife, particularly elephants.

Right now Kenya is experiencing a booming population that has encroached on the country's national parks. Towns are also being built in the middle of elephant migration paths. Now, when elephants travel these paths they are trampling over towns. Many times they ruin houses, gardens, and schools. They have also been known to trample and kill people. People of the town are getting angry and taking it out on the elephants.

Do the people of Kenya have a right to be mad at the elephants? Do the elephants have the right to trample and ruin towns? What would you do to solve this problem?